

It's an exciting time for you and your preschooler! They're on their own in a classroom or childcare center making friends, learning, growing, and exploring. Your child will certainly get all the care and support they need to be successful in their classroom. If you have been wondering what you can do to continue that support at home, then keep reading because you've come to the right place!

Welcome to the P-MELDS Home Companion!

The Preschool Maine Early Learning Development Standards (P-MELDS) document is where teachers and childcare providers go to make sure the classroom experiences, they create are exciting, engaging, and appropriate for meeting your child's academic and developmental needs. P-MELDS is full of useful information, and it is highly recommended that you download a free copy for your personal use. After you've done that, come back here for even more useful information. Don't worry, we'll wait.

Welcome back! Now that you have P-MELDS, you're ready to start supporting your child's educational journey. The purpose of this document is to provide you with ideas for interactions and activities that you can do at home with your child that follow P-MELDS. This is by no means an exhaustive list of interactions and activities you can do with your child at home, but it is a great place to begin.

You can use this document to help get ideas for what to do when you and your child want to play together, when your child is showing an interest in something and you'd like to support their curiosity, or when you receive an update from your child's teacher about what they've been learning in class and you want to continue that learning at home. The options are endless!

This is one of the greatest and most exciting times for you and your child, and the P-MELDS Home Companion is here to help. Enjoy!



Social and Emotional Development

Standards for Social and Emotional Development

Domain	Goal Topic	Element	Code
Social Emotional Development	1. Emotional Development	a. Self Concept	1a.
		b. Self Regulation	1b.
		c. Sympathy and Empathy	1c.
		d. Adapting to Diverse Settings	1d.
	2. Social Development	a. Building Relationships with Others	2a.
		b. Respecting Similarities and Differences	2b.

Try these ideas at home to support Social and Emotional Development:

- **Regulate yourself.** Children at this age often need help and support from an adult when they are calming down. The best way to help a child calm down is to make sure that you are also calm (regulated) and able to support them.
- **Identify Emotions.** Talking with your child about how they (and you) are feeling and the reason you're having this feeling will help them learn about their emotions. Teaching them to notice what calms them down (i.e. a hug, some space, a toy) when they're having big feelings will help them manage or regulate their emotions.
 - Model saying how you are feeling so they will have examples of language to use when they are trying to speak.
 - Give examples of things you do to help regulate how you're feeling so they will have examples of strategies they can use for themselves.
 - For example, you may model, "I am mad because he took my toy. I need a hug."
- **Create a space where your child can share how they are feeling.** It can be a place in their room or a cushion fort on the sofa. It should be a place they helped choose or create.
 - Actively listen to your child and try to understand their emotions.
- **Use stuffies, lovies, or puppets to practice talking about feelings through play.** It may be hard for your child to jump right into talking about their feelings. But if you do creative play using stuffies or puppets, they may find it easier to voice the feelings and regulation strategies of the character they are pretending to be.



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- During or after reading a story with your child, **ask them questions about the story.**
 - For example, you may ask: "Why do you think the character did this?"
 - "Why were they feeling sad?"
 - "What do you think this character is thinking?"
 - "What would you do if you were that character?"
- **Give opportunities for play choices.** Children make lots of decisions throughout their day, especially during play time. It's important for them to have a sense of what they like and what they want, so that they are able to feel confident making choices that are different from their peers.
- **Give opportunities for daily-life choices.** Offer your child 2-3 appropriate options to choose from throughout your day. This will help them learn how to make

decisions that feel right for them, and it will give them a sense of direction and control.

- For example: "Do you want to wear the red shirt, the blue shirt, or the purple shirt today?"
- "Do you want to tiptoe or stomp to the bathroom for bath time?"
- **Model cleaning up!** Cleaning up after play and putting items away are age appropriate first steps to building responsibility. Create routines around putting things back and cleaning up. Sometimes playing a song or racing a timer can help it feel more fun!



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- **Model inviting your child to play with you, or have them practice inviting you to play with them.** Remind them to introduce themselves and then say, "Do you want to play with me?"
- **Encourage your child to invite others to play.** Inviting other children to play, or engaging in play with other children are both first steps toward building strong friendships.
- **Take turns being the leader and the follower in play with your child.** Follow along with them as they choose the

activity and roles you both will have in play. Then, it's your turn! Visit [NPR.org](https://www.npr.org) to learn more about "5-Minute Play Time".

- **Teach children the rules.** Children often spend time in lots of different places - home, school, the playground, the grocery store, etc. It's important that they can listen to an adult and follow safety rules, so that they can feel safe and be safe in all the places they go.
- **Safety:** Practicing safety rules all the time can help children know how to follow them even when they're very excited or upset. Practice can look like a game!
 - For example: Create a scavenger hunt or go 'exploring' around the house, have your child practice freezing when you say "stop", or turning to look at you from wherever they are when you say their name.
- **Build language and advocacy skills.** Encourage your child to use words or

communication strategies to ask for what they want or need.

- For example: If your child holds out a snack to be opened, ask them "How can I help?" or "Do you need something?" to prompt more language or communication.
- Children are natural sorters, and are trying to make sense of their world. **Support children in noticing and naming similarities and differences** within their family and community.
 - Similarities and differences can be skin color, holidays/cultural events observed, types of food eaten, etc.
 - Beyond family and community, you can explore globes and world maps with your child to learn more about the similarities and differences between the people of the world. See the Social Sciences subdomain at the end of this document for more information on that.

Approaches to Learning and Play

Standards for Approaches to Learning and Play

Domain	Goal Topic	Element	Code
Approaches to Learning and Play	3. Mindset	a. Engagement	3a.
		b. Persistence	3b.
		c. Initiative	3c.
		d. Curiosity	3d.
	4. Executive Functions	a. Reflections	4a.
		b. Problem Solving	4b.
		c. Flexibility	4c.
	5. Creativity, Invention, and Imagination	a. Visual Arts	5a.
		b. Movement and Dance	5b.
		c. Music	5c.
		d. Dramatic Play and Expression	5d.

Try these ideas at home to support purposeful Learning and Play:

- **Give your child time to engage in open-ended play** (building with blocks or recycled materials, drawing, imaginative play). Let them choose what they play and think of ideas on their own (or with you) to help it feel exciting to them.
 - If your child says they are bored, help them think of ideas that might maintain play at the same activity. Boredom can often lead to inspiration!



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- **Teach your child persistence and problem-solving skills.** If they are struggling with something (putting their jacket on, finding a toy, opening a snack), talk through the problem with them instead of solving it for them.
 - For example: “Okay, what’s the first step to zipping your jacket?”
 - “Do you remember where you last saw your toy? Let’s retrace your steps.”
 - “When I open these, I pinch both sides of the wrapper like this. You try!”
- **Narrate what you are thinking** as you come across moments you have to problem solve and be flexible in your day. If you’re feeling frustrated that you’re running late or forgot something,

share this with your child. Then, talk about your thought process as you self-regulate.

- For example: “Oh no, I meant to get milk at the store for breakfast! I’m feeling really disappointed, but mistakes happen and I’m going to take a deep breath while I think of a new plan for what we can eat.”
- **Help your child assess risks as they play, both inside and outside.** Instead of saying “Be careful!” when they’re playing, help them learn to notice what ways they can challenge themselves while still feeling safe and comfortable.
 - For example: “I notice your block tower is getting really high and wobbling. Where could you move so if it crashes you won’t get bumped by blocks?” or “You’re so focused on climbing! As you move your feet, push down gently in each new spot you step to make sure it feels like you won’t slip.”
- **Encourage curiosity!** You won’t be able to answer every question your child has, but you can acknowledge their curiosity and model how to do research.
 - Examples: “I actually don’t know the answer to that question, should we look it up together?” or “You are asking questions to learn about the world around you. Being curious is a great skill!”
- **Give your child opportunities to be creative.** That could look like drawing, painting, imaginative play, dancing

together at home, or telling stories together. Hang art your child makes in your home. Help your child learn to reflect on their thought process by asking questions or making comments about their creations.

- Examples: “I notice you’re using lots of colors.”
- “Why did you choose to add blue to your artwork?”
- “How does this music make you feel?”
- **Dress up and act out a story.** Choose a story with your child to act out. Have them help decide who will be the characters, and pick out costumes. Give your child a chance to follow your ideas for acting out the story, and make sure they also get a chance to control the situation and give ideas for you to follow during your performance.
- **Build executive functioning skills** through the following activities:
 - Creating bedtime and morning routines so children know what to expect and when;
 - Making lists;
 - Breaking down tasks to smaller tasks;
 - Using a reward system;
 - Taking frequent breaks to help regulate mood and focus;
 - Playing games that require strategy such as Simon Says, Duck Duck Goose, board games, and card games;



- Doing puzzles to help develop cognitive flexibility and working memory;
- Playing with blocks;
- Imaginary play; and
- Using a timer to help children better understand the physical timing of tasks.
- **Give children a chance to solve problems;** it builds persistence and confidence!



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Language and Literacy

Standards for Approaches to Early Language and Literacy

Domain	Goal Topic	Element	Code
Language and Literacy	6. Speaking and Listening	a. Comprehension and Collaboration	6a.
		b. Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas	6b.
	7. Knowledge of Language	a. Conventions of Standard English	7a.
		b. Vocabulary Acquisition and Use	7b.
	8. Foundations of Early Literacy	a. Print Concepts	8a.
		b. Phonological Awareness	8b.
		c. Phonics and Word Recognition	8c.
		d. Key Ideas and Details	8d.
		e. Craft and Structure	8e.
		f. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	8f.
		g. Fluency	8g.
	9. Writing	a. Composing for Audience and Purpose	9a.
		b. Process and Production	9b.
		c. Inquiry to Build and Present Knowledge	9c.

Try these ideas at home to support Language and Literacy:

- **Read and talk about books:** Oral language and vocabulary are important in children's language and literacy development. Reading (or listening) to books, telling stories, and conversing with your child about a variety of topics will help them develop a broad vocabulary. This will help them become stronger readers and writers.
 - As you read with your child, underline the title of the book with your finger and identify the cover of the book.
 - Point out what a letter is and what a word is when reading.
 - Model taking care of books and gently turning one page at a time.
- **Ask open-ended questions** while talking with your child, or after reading them a story.
 - For example: "How do you think the character was feeling? Why?"
 - "What would you do if you were that character?"
- **Keep a variety of writing tools** and materials available at home including markers, pencils, and crayons. Encourage children to draw, paint, and trace objects.
- Help children learn to **write the letters of their names**.
- **Draw a picture** or write a message to friends and family.



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- **Play “Letter I Spy” with your child.** Choose a letter (start with letters in their name) to look for in books, on street signs, at the grocery store, or around the house.
- **Sing rhyming songs, recite poems, or play a game** to see how many rhyming words you can come up with with your child. Listen to music and see if you can identify any rhymes in songs.
- **Go on a ‘sound hunt’.** Make a sound that a letter makes and have your child search their room or the house looking for things that begin with that sound. Make sure to give them a chance to make a sound for you to search for.
 - For example, “OK, here’s the sound: ‘ssssssss’. Ready, go!” The child then finds items like socks, sneakers, a stuffie, etc.
 - Remember that this is a sound hunt, not a letter hunt, so if they are searching for things starting with the /k/ sound, finding a crayon and a kite are both correct.
- **Play with words** to build phonemic awareness, an essential pre-reading and writing skill. For example, you may:

- Change the first sound in words to a different sound to make new words/rhymes.
- Notice the first and last sounds you hear in words.

- **Play Alphabet Pillow Jumping:** Place a letter on each pillow and jump from pillow-to-pillow, naming each letter.
- **Try a scavenger hunt** game to look for letters, shapes, colors, or beginning sounds.
- **Become authors and illustrators.** Tell your child a short story with a clear beginning, middle, and end and write it down. Then illustrate the story together. Once finished, let your child tell a story that you write down, and again illustrate it together.
 - You can ask some questions while they’re telling their story to help with creativity and cohesion.



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- **Play ‘story tag’.** Create a story with your child, taking turns being the storyteller and the listener.
 - For example, “Once upon a time there was a gorilla and a princess. They were having a picnic. The gorilla opened the picnic basket, and the

princess looked in it and said, 'yay!' Then what happened?" "Then the princess put her hands in the basket and pulled out... puppies! They climbed on her and licked her face and made her happy. Then what

happened" "Then the gorilla started playing with the puppies, too. They were having a puppy picnic party! It was fun, but they were still hungry. Then what happened?"....




Physical Development and Health

Standards for Physical Development and Health

Domain	Goal Topic	Element	Code
Physical Development and Health	10. Wellness	a. Health Knowledge and Practices	10a.
		b. Physical Health Status	10b.
		c. Nutrition	10c.
		d. Safety	10d.
	11. Motor Skills and Movement Patterns	a. Fine Motor	11a.
		b. Gross Motor	11b.

Try these ideas at home to support Physical Development and Health:

- **Talk about personal hygiene tasks** such as washing your hands, brushing your teeth, and using a tissue. Explain why we do those things and how doing those things helps keep us and the people around us healthy.
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- Image by Freepik*
- **Have discussions about physical health.** Give language to your child to use for talking about their health, including:
 - Cuts, scrapes, bumps, and bruises;
 - Illness and symptoms of illness;
 - (when they are crying after an incident like falling down) the difference between tears due to pain/injury and tears due to being scared about the incident.
 - During meal and snack times, **talk about the foods being eaten**, letting them know about any health benefits.
 - For example, you may say: “That bread has carbohydrates, which gives energy to your muscles.”
 - “Orange juice has Vitamin C, which gives your body weapons to fight germs and viruses, and helps keep you healthy.”
 - “Cookies give you smiles, but they don’t really have anything to make your body healthy, but we’re still going to eat 1 because smiles are important, too.”
 - **Promote safety** by reminding your child that only food should go in their mouth, and let them know things that shouldn’t go in their mouth or be consumed:
 - Food found on the floor;
 - Toys and other small objects that are not food (for example, buttons and coins);
 - Play doh, glue, crayons;

- The ends of markers, pens, and pencils;
- Cleaning liquids and powders.
- **Discourage children from using their mouths and teeth as tools to open things**, or for chewing on things like straws and pen/marker caps.
- **Practice identifying physical safety hazards**, and help think of ideas to avoid those hazards.
 - For example, “Climbing on the furniture to reach something high up may help you reach it, but it’s a little dangerous because you might fall off. Step stools are a safer way to reach high things because that’s what they are made for. What else could you do to safely get something that is high up?”
- **Help your child identify safe adults, and be comfortable talking about their physical health with those adults.** It is important for your child to be able to feel comfortable talking about their physical health to adults outside of home like their teachers, providers, and school nurses.
- **Practice fine motor development through crafts and puppets!** Making crafts, inventing things out of recycled materials, and making sock and finger puppets are a great way to promote fine motor development in a fun and creative way. When you’re finished, you and your child will also have new fun and exciting things to play with together!

- The puppets you create are also a useful play tool for practicing different types of communication skills.

- **Encourage children to color and draw on paper**
- **Encourage children to use spoons and forks independently.**



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- **Allow extra time** in the mornings for children to dress independently: buttoning, zippering, fastening, putting on shoes, and pulling on clothing.
- Children can **build strong hand muscle and develop eye-hand coordination skills** by sorting buttons by color or size.
- Encourage your child to do **puzzles**.
- **Peel stickers** and make sticker collages.
- **Support motor development by helping with everyday family tasks** such as:
 - Setting the table and pouring milk;
 - Helping change the toilet paper rolls;
 - Picking up, putting away, and folding clothes;
 - Cleaning up after play time.
- As a whole, **gross motor skills can be supported at home** through a wide variety of activities, including:

- Using masking tape or chalk to make a balance beam for walking, dancing, climbing, jumping on a trampoline;
- Encouraging children to do household chores such as sweeping, mopping, and doing dishes;
- Playing Simon Says;
- Playing on a playground;
- Walking like different animals;
- Drawing on the tar with chalk.

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development refers to the child's skills and ability to think, reason, understand, and process information. The activities found below will help your child develop problem-solving skills, memory, attention, spatial awareness, and the ability to follow directions. This domain is broken into 3 subdomains, and they are listed below.

Standards for Mathematical Practices and Reasoning

Domain	Sub Domain	Goal Topic	Element	Code
Cognitive Development	Mathematical Practices and Reasoning	12. Numeracy and Operations	a. Mathematical Practices	12a.
			b. Counting and Cardinality Cluster	12b.
			c. Operations and Algebraic Thinking	12c.
		13. Geometric Reasonings	a. Geometry	13a.
		14. Statistical Reasonings	a. Measurement and Data	14a.

Try these ideas at home to support Math Development:

- **Count every day** objects. Count toys, fingers, toes, steps while walking, and items all around you.
- **Look for numbers** all around your home or in places like the grocery store.
- **Sing counting songs** to practice counting in order.
- Ask your child to **find objects in the room that match different shapes** such as circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles.
- **Build patterns** with toys using colors and shapes.
- **Play "I Spy"** with colors, shapes, and numbers.
- **Cook with your child!** Measure ingredients, count, and talk about "more" and "less."
- **Compare sizes** of toys: larger and smaller.
- **Use different sized cups and containers** when playing in the water.
- **Play simple board games** that involve counting.
- **Use blocks to build towers**, structures, and practice counting the blocks. If you don't have blocks at home, you can use anything: cereal boxes, recyclable items, books, pillows, or rolled up blankets.
- **Roll out playdough** into different shapes.
- Encourage your child to **find different solutions to problems**.
- **Go on an outdoor scientific research expedition.** Explore nature with your child, searching for specific things naturally occurring in your area, for example acorns, mushrooms, dandelions, etc. Bring a piece of paper and something to write with, make columns and write down the different things you're looking for, and have your child tally the items found.



- After the research is complete, count the tally marks with your child to see what you found the most of.



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Standards for Scientific Reasoning

Domain	Sub Domain	Goal Topic	Element	Code
Cognitive Development	Scientific Reasoning	15. Scientific Practices and Reasoning	a. Exploration	15a.
			b. Application of Science Concepts and Practices	15b.
		16. Physical Science and Engineering	a. Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions	16a.
			b. Engineering	16b.
		17. Earth Science	a. Earth Systems	17a.
			b. The Earth and Human Activity	17b.
		18. Life Science	a. Organisms: Structures and Processes	18a.

Try these ideas at home to support Scientific Reasoning Development:

- Put on play clothes and let your child **jump in the puddles and mud!** Earth Science can look like outdoor exploration at this age.
- **Take a walk on a rainy day** and look for worms.
- **Play with water.** Explore sinking and floating.
- **Build ramps** with different materials in your home, like paper towel tubes or other recycled materials.
- **Observe the world** around you. Narrate what you notice by saying things like, “I see the trees are moving,” or “The sun feels warm on my skin.”
- **Conduct simple science experiments** like mixing colors, observing plant growth, or exploring magnets.
- Take **nature walks** and discuss observations about plants, animals, and weather.



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- **Use magnifying glasses** to examine small objects.
- **Make paper airplanes.** Work together guessing what will happen when the corners of the wings are folded up. Then find out by flying the airplanes! What about when the corners are folded down? One corner is up and the other is down?
 - When making the paper airplanes, make sure you let your child fold the paper themselves. Letting them do the work will give them confidence and help strengthen fine-motor muscles.
 - It's OK to help fix some folds so the airplane will fly better, but let them try first.
- **Talk about recycling** and how it can help the community and the Earth. Mention the importance of putting trash in bins and not littering.

Standards for Social Sciences

Domain	Sub Domain	Goal Topic	Element	Code
Cognitive Development	Social Sciences	19. People, Communities, and their Environment	a. Civics and Government	19a.
			b. Economics	19b.
			c. Geography	19c.
			d. History and Culture	19d.

Try these ideas at home to support Social Sciences Development:

- **Play pretend and explore different roles** and situations such as playing house, pretending to go to the doctor, or pretend to go grocery shopping.
- When you visit your local library, think about **selecting books with characters that are both similar and different** from the people in your family.
- **Create a simple family tree** with pictures of different family members.
- **Discuss emotions** of characters in books. Ask your child if they have ever felt the same way as the character.
- **Take walks around the neighborhood** and point out different types of homes and landmarks (both natural and human made).
- Discuss different **community jobs** such as firefighters, teachers, or doctors.
- **Play dress-up games** pretending to be different people in the community such



as librarians, bus drivers, or construction workers.

- Help choose things to wear for the jobs being played, and make sure your child gets to practice fastening, buttoning, or zippering their costumes.
- **Cook a meal together.** Investigate the history or cultural significance of the food that you're eating. Look up where food items come from. Consider asking:
 - "Where did this corn grow?"
 - "Where did this food originate?"



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- **Discuss traditions or special things you do with your child.** Everyone has a culture. Name some traditions you do as family that are a part of yours. Visit your local library to find books about other cultures, communities, or holidays that may be different from yours.
- **Look at a map together.** Point out different places and features.
 - Follow a map on a walk or make a map of your neighborhood.
 - Use a map or globe to find the locations of the places where the cultures and holidays you talked about above came from.